

DECISION RECORD

EA Number: OR-056-01-68

Title Of Action: Trout Creek Boat Launch Expansion and Riparian Area Restoration

Background:

Prineville District of the Bureau of Land Management(BLM) analyzed a proposal to increase the size and capacity of a boat ramp and to create hardened pedestrian trails. The Proposed Action would occur at the Trout Creek Recreation Site, river mile 89.6 on the lower Deschutes River. BLM believes this action is necessary to eliminate the impacts of unauthorized boat launch sites and trails on a variety of natural resources, including riparian habitat and fisheries. Boat ramp work would be accomplished using BLM personnel and equipment; trail work would be completed using volunteers.

Decision:

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action as described and analyzed in the Environmental Assessment (EA) No. OR-056-01-68. The Proposed Action would increase the size and capability of an existing boat ramp and installation of a hardened trail. Two unauthorized sites and user developed trails would be closed to reduce impacts on the riparian zone and enhance fisheries. The Proposed Action will be modified slightly to allow planting of native vegetation to improve vegetative cover and aesthetics for recreational users. This decision is based on a careful review of the project impacts and mitigation measures as described in the Environmental Analysis.

Rational:

Currently, only two vehicles can utilize the Trout Creek boat launch simultaneously. This has caused congestion as well as occasional user conflicts during peak use periods. Additionally, on any busy weekend, the designated launch area is full of rental and commercial boats, and gear, causing even greater congestion problems. This issue was discussed in the 1993 Lower Deschutes River Management Plan (LDRMP), pg. 116, which mandated: "confine vehicle parking for raft rentals to designated spaces."

The congestion at the authorized boat ramp has caused riparian areas to be impacted by use of two unauthorized boat launch locations upstream from the designated launch and creation of connector trails from camp sites to the river. Soil and vegetation found on the trails accessing the river immediately downstream of the designated launch site have been heavily impacted. This concentrated use has precluded achieving one of the riparian goals mandated in the LDRMP (pg. 31), which stated: "That riparian plant communities will be managed to maintain or achieve a minimum of 60 percent of the ecological vegetative potential within 15 years," with the long term goal being full vegetative potential, depending on the specific site characteristics.

The boat launch expansion would allow for improved flow of vehicles and boats, as well as, provide a staging area for both private and commercial use. It would also decrease congestion and user conflicts. This expansion would encourage the use of the designated boat launch and reduce use of unauthorized sites. Eliminating launchings in these fragile areas would provide riparian area recovery.

Installation of a hardened trail downstream from the designated launch site would focus angler and rafter use in this area. The surrounding area would recover over time, providing habitat essential for fish and wildlife species and esthetic improvement.

Alternatives:

No Action

The only other alternative considered for correcting the existing situation at Trout Creek Recreation Site was No Action. This alternative would allow continued congestion at the Trout Creek launch site and degradation associated with existing trails along the river and launching of boats in unauthorized, sensitive riparian areas. Additional damage to the riparian area within in the proposed project boundary would be expected to result in erosion and bank trenching. Not taking action to correct this problem would not comply with the LDRMP directives, which are to “protect and enhance,” (pg 23) all outstandingly remarkable values. These values were determined to be recreation, fisheries, wildlife, cultural, geologic, scenic and botanical. The reclamation of the riparian area vegetation would remain inadequate by plan guidelines.

Response to public Comment:

The decision incorporates suggestions made in a comment letter to enhance the aesthetics of the launch area by planting native shrubs and trees to provide a break between the launch and staging area and summer shade. A suggestion to remove non native blackberry vegetation to the west of the launch ramp and replace with native vegetation was not incorporated since the topography does not allow for access to this area and the current vegetation screens the ranger station from the river. Another comment to increase the width of the ramp and cut of the corner of the raft staging area was not incorporated, since it decreased the space available for rafting groups, which was the primary type of use affected by the closures.

Implementation:

This decision will be implemented 30 days after public notification.

Robert Towne
Deschutes Field Manager

Date